

12 November 1954

SUBJECT: Mechanical Translation

Reference is made to a proposal for research on mechanical translation by [] of the Institute of Languages and Linguistics (ILL), STAT
[] dated 20 October 1954. It is believed that the STAT
following questions should be posed to [] prior to further con- STAT
sideration of his proposal.

1. Page 1, numbered paragraph 2:

What does "processing" of lexical material mean? In what technical and scientific fields is it proposed to process lexical material? Can some general estimate of the number of structural-syntactic operations be made?

2. Numbered paragraph 3:

What is meant by doing translation mechanically, inasmuch as the entire proposal does not have as an end result a machine?

3. Numbered paragraph 4:

Is there not human intervention prior to the input of the text in the transliteration of the text, or is it anticipated that the machine will accept cyrillic characters, or is it anticipated that there will be an electronic scanner to assist the input of the text?

4. Page 2, paragraph headed "Tests":

What has happened to the joint project of ILL with IBM?

5. Page 3, numbered paragraph 5:

Are there not already available "equivalence frequency" studies that might be used to reduce the amount of research necessary?

6. Paragraph headed "Corollary Research":

By how much could the expense of the proposal be reduced if time devoted to corollary research were eliminated?

7. Page 6, paragraph headed "Objectives and Results":

The estimate here is that five to seven thousand words will be processed for the lexicon. Are these words to include words of the core language or only words of a scientific and technical nature? If the former, how many words of a microglossary type would be involved? If the latter, has the core language already been established, if so, what is its size? In either case does not five to seven thousand words for approximately

14 people over a year's time seem rather a small number? If this rate were to continue, presumably it would take about 16 years of this type of research to get the required scientific and technical Russian lexicon to a stage where it might be used for regular texts. This paragraph as a whole is very vague. Could it be clarified so as to express more precisely what we could expect to have at the end of the year?

8. Page 7, paragraph headed "Coordinating Committee":

What is meant by "consultative control"?

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